

A GREAT CRIME OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

What Has Become of
the \$100,000,000
Fund that Was Put
Aside
Twenty Years Ago
for the Indian Famine
Sufferers?

Fifty million human beings starving to death—one-tenth that number already beyond all suffering—that is the frightful story to be recorded in telling of the present famine in India. Think of it, you who dwell in plenty, and who grumble because you have only three meals a day! Think of it—five million human beings—black, it is true, but human beings after all—dead from lack of food!

And, strange to say, civilization does not and has not realized what is happening in that wonderful land of romances, mysteries and wealth. Civilization throws up its hands in horror, and very properly, when a few hundred Armenians are massacred, but it seems almost indifferent when millions of Hindus drop down by thousands, starved to death. Civilization feels only for what concerns its immediate self; and India is far away and its peoples are black, so what does it matter whether there be a million more or less?

The fact of the matter is that the British newspapers are to blame for this state of ignorance regarding the famine. They have good reason, too, for being thus silent, or nearly so, for it is a story calculated to bring the blush of shame to every man and woman having the slightest claim to humanity. It is a black spot in British history, and naturally the British papers, with their misplaced patriotism, are anxious to conceal the true state of affairs.

Some of the illustrated papers, it is true, have brought a few pictures of starving natives—mere bags of skin and bone—but the great public is carefully kept in blissful ignorance of the true state of affairs. Continental papers take very little interest in anything not appertaining to diplomacy, and so the true story has never been told—not even in the papers published in India, for most of them are owned by British officials who have good reason for not telling all they know.

The Sunday Journal is enabled for the first time to give an unvarnished statement of facts, most of them obtained from the missionaries stationed at the forty relief stations maintained in various parts of India by the Christian Herald of this city. To more fully understand how it is possible for one of the wealthiest countries in the world to be thus periodically afflicted it should be remembered that almost the entire wealth is in the hands of the few—a few thousand perhaps—and that the great mass of nearly three hundred million beings lives in abject poverty.

Then, too, nearly every Hindu is a vegetarian, and would rather die than touch meat.

But all this is not the worst by any means. If it were merely that a frightful visitation had come upon the unhappy country, humanity would shudder and do its best to alleviate the sufferings of those afflicted, but in this instance there is more than a visitation of God—the crime of man against fellow man—the diversion of a great famine fund to personal uses.

That is the arraignment—that is the fearful charge. The British officials of India and some of the native ones are accused of having misappropriated \$100,000,000 set aside for just such purposes as this present—to supply food and life for the unknown millions.

After the famine of 1877 the Government set aside twenty million pounds sterling to be used in case of another famine. Crops proved good for nearly twenty years, and then came the scarcity of last year. Of course, the Viceroy at once inquired for the fund in question and learned that it had been "diverted" into other channels. Report had it that the money was used to repair roads and to fortify certain mountain passes, but the term "diversion" in this case covered a multitude of sins. The fact of the matter was that the money had disappeared with the exception of about \$1,000,000, which was not even a drop in the bucket.

Scarcely anything has been printed about this misfeasance, but it is a common topic of conversation in India. Some bold, daring persons have even written letters on the subject to the editors of certain papers, among them the Bombay Guardian, but no official statement has ever been made, save that most of the money had disappeared. The truth of this accusation is attested by the missionaries distributing recent famine funds.

The immense Famine Fund, begun after the famine of 1877, was supposed to guarantee freedom from all such visitations. It was intended for the purchase of food for the starving.

Now that it has been looked for and found missing, the authorities point a few railroads, which, they say, were built with it. But as the missionaries reply, the people cannot eat railroads.

The missionaries all say the money has been diverted from its original purpose, and some assert that much of it was stolen by an English political ring. Lord Dufferin, in the April number of the North American Review, excuses the use made of this money by saying the roads it built gave employment to starving natives in past years and now facilitate the distribution of food.

But there is no food to distribute.

The money these railroads cost, the millions that have mysteriously disappeared and the other millions of the Famine Fund used for military purposes, for which they never were intended, would, if now available, feed the starving natives of India.

This great Famine Fund was raised by taxing the natives, and handled solely by Englishmen, thousands of whom are now living in luxury in London, while their victims starve on the plains of India.

The official classes are making every effort to stifle the complaints of the missionaries and prevent an investigation of the finances of India. But the mission aries are strenuously asking where are the millions of the Famine Fund and by what right a penny of the money was used for any other purpose than that for which it was originally intended. A 137.

First came a scurrying to obtain money to relieve the suffering, which at that time (last Spring) had not yet assumed an acute stage. Instead of getting grain of



THE JEWELS WORN BY THIS PRINCE OF THE FAMINE DISTRICT WOULD FEED 250,000 PEOPLE FOR THREE MONTHS.

The Maharajah of Kho'apu, from a Photograph.

all sorts, those in charge of the relief work sent money, but money was useless, for there was no food to buy in the afflicted districts. At least it dawned upon the British officials that natives were approaching a crisis, and that prompt action must be taken.

Accordingly the report was sent out that a great plague had stricken India and that thousands were dying daily. This was true, for in Bombay alone the deaths in one day amounted to two thousand. But the reports did not tell all the truth. Nothing was said about lack of food and sustenance, nothing was said of the thousands who were dropping where they stood—dead from hunger.

It is well known that in case of starvation, dysentery is one of the symptoms, and accordingly the medical authorities reported thousands of deaths as being due to this cause, hiding—unintentionally perhaps—the real cause—starvation.

At last, after \$0,000 had died in one district alone, the Government decided that an appeal for help must be made, and this was done. And how did England respond? Where \$50,000,000 was needed, \$2,000,000 was given. While untold wealth was squandered in preparation for the Queen's diamond jubilee, millions were starving. That is how England replied to the request for help.

The native government thereupon opened relief stations at which work was given to as many as could be accommodated. The famine area comprised 100,000 square miles having a population of 44,000,000 persons. The area in which there was a scar-

cily covered 121,000 square miles, with a population of 44,000,000.

The relief stations, or less than one-tenth of the number in distress. The work required at these stations is too much for many of the poor wretches, and in consequence many have received aid without earning the pittance meted out to them.

Furthermore, the stations are so far away from the districts most distressed that they are of scarcely any use. It is true that in their immediate vicinity good is done, but the great majority of the starving are so weak that they cannot reach the relief stations. Along the sides of the roads leading from the interior to the cities, hundreds of bodies can be seen, which even the vultures will not touch, for there is nothing for the birds of prey, save bones.

In the famine of 1877 six millions died. According to Sir Edwin Arnold in an article on the famine, ten millions will die in the present one, unless the whole world helps.

Commissioner Booth-Tucker, of the Salvation Army, who was born in India, and passed most of his life there, said recently:

"Eleven out of every twelve persons in India—outside of the cities—are agriculturists; that is, they are dependent upon the land for their sustenance. In these parts the famine is most felt. In the cities there is always work and plenty of charity, and as the world judges from the cities, many will not believe that the famine can be as bad as alleged. It is a curious thing that the greatest number of deaths from starva-

tion take place in the most fertile districts. This is due to the fact that all laborers are paid for their work in food. If then the crops fail, they are not paid, and get neither food nor wages. Hence the terrible state of affairs prevailing there at present."

A member of the Salvation Army, in high authority, who spent seven years in India, was much more outspoken, on the promise that no name be used.

"I know," said this person, "that the British officials have stolen the famine fund for their own uses, such as building houses for themselves, to buy annuities and similar selfish ends. This has been going on for twenty years, and everybody has winked at it in the vain hope that there would be no more famines. It is a disgrace, and I am astonished that nothing has been printed about it heretofore."

To show the extent of the famine, a Methodist missionary, stationed at Jabalpur, can be quoted as saying that in that district alone 28,000 died from starvation in four months. At Poona, one of the plague centres of India, the state of affairs beggars description. The unfortunates simply drop wherever they may be, and being fatalists, they simply remain passive until death overtakes them.

In one instance, a group of father, mother and two children was being photographed. When the photographer sought to alter their poses he found that the entire family had passed into the next world. The blood of the starving wretches becomes so thin that the brain ceases to act, and they sit in a dull stupor, caring for nothing and practically oblivious to everything.

One of the missionaries reports a trip he

took through the central provinces. According to him the natives are so emaciated as to scarcely resemble human beings. They fight like tigers over a grain of rice, and in many cases commit suicide through means of poisonous herbs obtained in the jungle.

The description of one of these stricken beings is awful. The head is out of all proportion, the legs and arms are like sticks, the skin looks like shrivelled parchment and is covered with bleeding, festering sores.

In many cases the women try to sell their children to the Europeans in the hope of saving the lives of the babes. When the parents find that children are not saleable merchandise they return to their villages in the vain hope that aid will come. First they live on one meal a day, then on one meal in two days, and finally they starve.

The famine district extends from the north of India, in Lahore, down through the Punjab, Delhi, Oudh, Jabalpur, Benares, Orissa and to Bombay. The distressed area covers nearly the remainder of the country from Kismir to Madras.

Fifty million dollars is needed to save India from the most terrible affliction in its history, and as Chief Justice Sir Francis McLean says, "The whole world will have to help."

The native prince, whose portrait accompanies this article, is Sir Chabu Chhatrapati, G. C. S. I., Maharajah of Kho'apu, one of the richest men in India. The jewels he wore when the picture was taken are worth \$250,000. With this amount 250,000 starving Hindus could be fed 100 days. However, speculation of this kind is futile, for the Maharajah is not

at all likely to sacrifice his jewels for the sake of saving the lives of a few thousand blacks.

Sir Shahu is the owner of some of the greatest jungles in India, where in Summer great hunting expeditions are held. These jungles cover nearly five thousand square miles, and if turned into agricultural districts would produce sustenance for half a million human beings.

The prince is of the very highest caste, as the spot on his forehead indicates and, naturally, he looks with disdain upon the poor wretches who are dying from lack of food. To him, as to every other high caste native, the low caste Hindus are mere animals, not worth considering in any light, save as the means to luxury.

One very interesting phase of the famine is that the natives consider it a visitation of their gods, and refuse to help themselves, declaring that fate meant them to starve. So strong is this rooted feeling of fatalism that a Hindu will not get out of the way of an approaching carriage. "If the gods will that I be run over, it will be so," he says, and he will not budge an inch. Entreaties, and even beatings, will have no effect, and the carriage will have to turn aside.

The constitution of the Hindus is ill-fitted by nature to withstand such a visitation as a famine. In fact a Hindu and he will squat himself in a corner and determine to die. And before a week has passed he will have pined away. His blood is naturally thin, and in no condition to long withstand the ravages of hunger.

Another interesting side to the famine

Hundreds of Thousands Starving and Dying, Yet None of these Millions Is Forthcoming to Aid Them in the Scourge

is the belief held by many natives that the famine has been sent by the gods because the famous Koh-i-noor has been taken from the country.

As a matter of fact, the Koh-i-noor is a "hoodoo," and, as far as recorded in history, every owner, save the present one, Queen Victoria, has died by violence.

The history of this stone is exceedingly interesting, and it is really no wonder that the natives believe it possessed of magic power. Folk lore says that it was found five thousand years ago in one of the famous Golconda mines, near the Kishna River, by Karma, one of the Hindu heroes, celebrated in the Mahabharata. Karma wore it as a sacred talisman.

When next heard of it was in the hands of Baber, who founded the Mogul dynasty in 1526. One of his sons used it as one of the eyes of a peacock in the famous peacock throne in the temple at Delhi.

In 1739 Nadir Shah, of Persia, invaded India and obtained the stone, which he named Koh-i-noor (Mountain of Light). Nadir Shah had much trouble in getting the stone, which belonged to Aurangzeb, the Mogul Emperor. The latter concealed it in his turban. Nadir Shah became aware of this, and at a court ceremonial exchanged turbans with him—an oriental method of expressing friendship.

Shah Shuja was the next owner. While in his possession it was first seen by an Englishman—Elphinstone, the emissary of the East India Company. Shuja sold the stone to Runjit Singh, of the Punjab, in 1821, for 125,000 rupees. In 1849, on the annexation of the Punjab to British India, the stone was sent as a present to Queen Victoria. It passed into her hands on June 3, 1850, weighing 186.136 carats. Under the supervision of the Prince Consort it was recut, eighty carats being lost in the operation.

Every owner of the Koh-i-noor, save Victoria, has been pursued by ill luck, and all have died violently, from mere stab wounds to boiling fat. And still the natives believe that the absence of the stone from India has much to do with the famine.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that money is most needed to save lives, and that money is grossly misappropriated, and that not even an investigation has been, or is likely to be, made.

Upon the conscience of England must rest the deaths of millions of human beings—human still, though black.

A London newspaper proprietor went to India in January to report the plague and personally visit the famine districts. He is Alfred C. Harnsworth, editor and proprietor of the Daily Mail. He says:

"The spectres, the gaunt, shrivelled old men and women, the babes, who seem all head and staring eyes, are in camps called 'poorhouses.' May I never go through such experiences as I have encountered in these awful settlements."

"The camp at Moorselagh hides its hideous self in a by-road some four miles out. It consists of a little village of grass huts in an enclosure. Can I ever forget the first five minutes within that ghastly circle? It was noon and food time, and the poor wrecks were drawn up in two long lines, squatting, crouching, propped up against walls or stones or neighbors, with great bony heads falling forward on ribbed chests."

"Many had become gibbering, slavering idiots. They had crawled in from their remote villages, fifty, a hundred, three hundred miles off. The women and the babes! So long as I may live shall I remember the heartrending spectacle of those wrinkled wives and their guardian skeletons."

"The doctor in charge, a Brahmin, and naked as the rest, cheered us by telling us that they would recover. It was hard to believe, but, given warm weather, all would be well, he assured us. But a cold day kills them off like flies."

"Brahmin assistants brought out the food. Such youngsters as were able chattered and clamored as the thin cakes of bread (those self-same 'chapatties' that formed the mutiny signal forty years back) were handed round. The men received eight, the women seven, the babes five, and the babes milk and sweetmeats. Then their little earthen pots or their humble vessels made of leaves were filled with 'dal,' a nauseous-looking native mixture of millet and pulse and other ingredients, and all fell to, quietly and by no means voraciously."

"A great kite swooped out of the hot sky and took a morsel of bread from the hands of an old man, who forthwith blubbered piteously. The good Brahmin smiled and gave another to pacify the poor old fellow."

"It wrung one's heart to hear of the proud old Mahomedans and Hindus, who, rather than accept charity, preferred to die in their houses. Yesterday I was told of an old native gentleman who had sold stick by stick until nothing was left but his little drinking vessel. He indignantly repelled the relief officers who called upon him, and it was not till at night, when they went secretly, that they prevailed upon him to accept, not money, but a little copying work, invented for the purpose, that he accepted help."

"The cases of the wives of the better class natives is very sad. As at home, these are the people of whose sufferings one hears least. There is a little family here dependent upon rents from land. They have had not a penny for ten months."

"They sold everything, even to the beams and roof of their house, and grandmother, mother, wife and sisters were slowly but surely starving. They, too, declined help, again and again, and in their case, and in a thousand cases, the money must be taken at night. The Mahomedan women are never seen, of course. They live for no eyes but their husbands'. In many and many an empty house in India to-day these poor women are proudly but surely passing from health to emaciation, and from emaciation to death."

The great question of caste that divides the people of India into numerous social strata and which is inextricably mixed with religious, commercial and political prejudices obtrudes itself even in the face of death."